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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

EFFECT OF WATER DRINKING.—As a result of gastro-intestinal experiments reported in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry* it was decided that water stimulates the gastric glands to activity when the stomach is empty as well as when food is present preparatory to digestion. Drinking water between meals causes a waste of glandular energy and water had, therefore, better be taken with meals.

THE WORK TREATMENT.—A writer in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* advises that useful work should be provided for chronic cases capable of performing it and, if possible, remunerative work for those who need the money. It is stated that in many chronic arthritis cases the muscular spasm and joint thickening yield more readily to industrial movements made with a purpose than to massage or remedial exercises. One woman's gait was greatly improved and her whole outlook on life brightened through taking up hand weaving which involved the use of from two to six foot pedals and the dextrous throwing of a shuttle. At the state colony for the insane at Gardner, Massachusetts, the patients made all their own clothing under skilled direction, weaving the materials for woolen garments. They raise some of their own food supplies, reclaim land and build new buildings.

DON'TS FOR NURSES.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* publishes eighteen short paragraphs of advice to nurses written by a doctor. Two are herewith transcribed: "Don't ever appear in the sick room with a 'long face.' It matters not what may have been said by the patient, you must remember always that you are dealing with one who is not normal, with a sick brain whose emanations are not what they would be if the brain were well." "Don't forget that you stand between the living and the dead. Your mission is to relieve God's sufferers and do be amiable."

DISCONTINUATION OF DISINFECTION.—The *Medical Record* calls attention to the fact that the New York Health Commissioner has ordered the discontinuation of the practice of fumigation following a case of infectious disease, with the exception of smallpox. Brooklyn is to continue the practice as a control in order to determine its efficiency or uselessness. Dr. Doty, former health officer of the Port of New York, believes that in the care of diphtheria, measles and scarlet

fever, reliance should be placed upon the destruction of the discharges and upon constant cleanliness. During the first month of the experiment no increase in the prevalence of infection was noted in the area where fumigation had been discontinued.

THE FATIGUE TOXIN AND IMMUNITY.—The *Medical Record* states that in 1909 Scafatì reported that the fatigued organism provides a favorable culture medium for the typhoid bacillus. Dogs injected with this fatigue toxin showed the result in a lowered degree of immunity to infection. Other eminent discoverers have found that physical fatigue predisposes to bacterial infection.

LANDAU'S TEST FOR SYPHILIS.—The *Interstate Medical Journal*, reporting tests printed in *Presse Médicale* says Landau tests for syphilis by the behavior of syphilitic serum toward iodine. The latter, dissolved in oil, is decolorized by contact with syphilitic serum but is not affected by non-syphilitic serum. If a dilute solution of starch is added, non-syphilitic sera give a deep blue color while syphilitic serum remains a pale yellow. Recently the test has been improved by substituting tetrachlormethane for the oil.

CHAPPED HANDS.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* says the chief reason for the chapping of the hands in cold weather is the lack of fat in the skin. It is at a minimum then because of the diminished sebaceous and sweat secretions. This and the dry air of winter make the skin dry and vulnerable at the very time when the cold air is itself irritating. This leads readily to chapping, if the hands must be exposed to soap and water, with the added irritation of antiseptics as in the case of physicians and nurses. The lack of fat should be supplied by greasing the skin occasionally with a well made cold cream or any bland fat. Soap and water, especially soap, should be avoided by the use of a hand lotion. The following formula is recommended: tragacanth gr. 80, glycerine $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., boric acid $\frac{1}{2}$ oz., water sufficient to make a pint, oil of bergamot m. 4, oil of lavender m. 2, oil of rose m. 1.

MORTALITY AMONG NURSES.—The Paris letter of the *Medical Record* says that few victims of the war deserve more sympathy than the nurses, now quite a number, who have succumbed to septic infection while caring for badly wounded soldiers. Not only are pus fingers followed by fatal generalized septicemia but this can occur from a single deep prick of the finger without the local abscess. The common safety pin is one of the most dangerous agents. Such a pin taken from a septic bandage, lain aside and inadvertently used again, may cause death if the nurse pricks her finger as she inserts it. Too much care cannot be taken in the protection of the smallest wounds on hands

or face. To succumb to generalized septicemia through careless management of a safety pin is a tragedy of the first magnitude.

BARE WALLS AND MONOTONY.—The *Indianapolis Medical Journal* describes the decoration of a part of the Indianapolis City Hospital known as the Burdsall units in honor of its founder. Celebrated artists have collaborated in the work and the result is artistic and charming. Not many hospitals can afford such beautiful decoration but something might be done in all hospitals to relieve the monotony of the walls which afford the only prospect that many patients have to gaze upon, sometimes for weeks at a time.

NEW METHOD OF REPAIR OF BONE.—The *New York Medical Journal* reports experiments in hastening the repair of bones after fracture. A piece of bone, a fresh specimen obtained from the morgue, is dried and ground to powder, mixed with petrolatum to the consistency of bismuth paste, sterilized by being placed in a large bottle immersed to the neck in water and boiled for two hours. It is taken up in a syringe, the needle inserted through the skin and fascia to the seat of the fracture, and as deeply as possible between the fractured ends. The space is thus infiltrated with petrolatum and bone cells which invite calcareous deposits and so hasten repair.

HIGH HEELS.—In a paper in the *British Medical Journal* on The Foot, the author concludes that for the inactive life of the drawing-room, office and shop, high heeled boots and shoes may be an advantage, giving to the foot a pleasant, braced-up feeling, quite different from that experienced by those who slither about in heel-less slippers.

TWILIGHT SLEEP IN PRACTICE.—In a paper in the *Medical Record*, Dr. W. H. W. Knipe commends the use of this technique in proper hands. The bad results in the past were due to a poor preparation of scopolamine, the use of too much morphine, the attempt to achieve absolute painlessness in child-birth, and the use of technique entirely different from that of Gauss. Twilight Sleep demands more care, more thought and more knowledge than a normally conducted labor. This increased attention paid to child-birth must result in better obstetrics by the general practitioner. Delivery under the Twilight Sleep method demands the entire attention of the physician from the beginning of labor to its close. Therefore, where no hospital exists, local hospitals should be established where physicians could send their patients and attend them under proper conditions.